

Eco-friendlier Methods for De-icing

Salt (sodium chloride) does a pretty good job of melting ice and snow. However, salt is bad news for gardens, for pets, for wells and lakes, and for all wildlife and plants that come in direct contact and through run-off. And salt can linger in the environment for at least 10 years. Here are some eco-friendlier ideas that are alternatives to salt.

The best alternative to introducing chemicals into the environment is not to introduce them. Any of the suggestions below come with their own known (and unknown) negative effects. It's worth considering whether it is necessary to melt the ice or if it can merely be made safer. Adding some traction might just be sufficient, **and** everyday products that can be added to slippery surfaces are better for the environment. And cheaper, too.

Sand, coffee grounds, and fireplace ash absorb sunlight, helping to melt snow and ice. They also provide traction.

Kitty litter offers good traction; it is useful to keep in your car in the event you are stuck.

Alfalfa meal, usually used as a fertilizer, is 100% natural. It helps melt ice, and its grainy texture delivers grip. It should be used in moderation.

Some things help ice from forming.

Vinegar can be mixed two-to-one with water and sprayed on car windows before ice forms.

Sugar Beet Juice de-ices by lowering the melting point of ice. It is safer and more effective than salt alone; a solution made of two lbs. salt, one gal. water, and one cup beet juice will help prevent icing when pre-applied to driveways and steps.

Calcium Chloride is a less-harsh alternative to salt that actually works better when temperatures are very low. When applied prior to a snowfall, it helps prevent the ice from sticking and makes shoveling easier. However, it can corrode concrete and pipes, and is damaging to trees and other vegetation. Once it gets into lake water it is impossible to separate out. It's best to use as little as possible.

Organic Salt-free Deicer is somewhat more costly than salt but will help to keep walkways and stairs ice-free.

Alcohol mixed two-to-one with water is an effective de-icer when sprayed on icy windows.

Of all the ways to mitigate ice and snow, shoveling remains the most natural, environmentally friendly method. And you get a good workout, to boot!